

# AN “ARCH-VILLAIN” TO BE REHABILITATED? MIXED PERCEPTIONS OF PANGERAN ANOM OF SAMBAS IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY; WITH AN APPENDIX ON JOHN HUNT<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Maritime raiding that included attacks on both native and (more rarely) foreign shipping was endemic around Borneo until well into the nineteenth century. The Muslim rulers of the coastal polities inextricably combined trading and raiding, and the relative profitability of the latter probably increased when local trading patterns were disrupted by European powers that attempted to control regional trade – including that with China – for their own commercial ends.<sup>2</sup> Local political events were also an important factor. Pontianak, established in the early 1770s, soon destroyed Sukadana, took over Mempawah and extended its influence progressively up the Kapuas River. This led to rivalry between Pontianak and Sambas for control over the Chinese mining communities (*kongsis*) and ongoing warfare on land and sea. Supported at first by the Dutch and increasingly by country trade<sup>3</sup> from Calcutta and Penang, Pontianak became a major center of trade in West Borneo, putting additional pressure on Sambas. British country vessels maintained trade with both sultanates and coastal ports under their respective control. However, in the first twelve years of the nineteenth century attacks by vessels based at Sambas and adjacent ports created much alarm in the English East India Company (EIC) governments at Penang and, later, Batavia.<sup>4</sup> The commander, Pangeran Anom,<sup>5</sup> became a particular *bête noir* and was blamed for many of the attacks on trading vessels at the time. The following extract from John Hunt’s *Sketch of Borneo or Pulo*

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1 This account is a revised and extended version of a paper that was presented at the Eighth Biennial Conference of the Borneo Research Council: “Borneo in the New Century,” Kuching, Sarawak, 31 July-1 August 2006.

2 See Warren (2001) for an analysis of the interlinked factors that influenced “piracy” in the Sulu zone at this time. Like Warren, I have some hesitation in using this generic Eurocentric word; hence the quotation marks.

3 “Country trade” is the term used for regional trade between India, the East Indies, China, etc., as opposed to trade directly originating from Britain. The traders and their “country vessels” or “country ships” were not employees of the English East India Company (EIC).

4 European names are used here for the main trading settlements.

5 “Pangeran Anom” is a royal title of Javanese origin. In the contemporary British literature there were variations in spelling, such as “Annam” or “Annom.”



*Kalamantan*, communicated to T.S. Raffles, then Lieutenant Governor of Java, gives the flavor of opinion about Sambas and its allies.<sup>6</sup> Names of vessels have been italicized.

In 1803, the ship *Susanna* of Calcutta, Captain Drysdale, was cut off near Pontiana by the Sambas and Borneo pirates; the Europeans were all massacred and the vessel taken. – In 1769 Captain Sadler, with his boat's crew, was murdered by the Sambas pirates off Mompava, having a prodigious quantity of gold dust; they did not succeed in cutting off the ship. – In 1806 Mr. Hopkins and crew, of the *Commerce*, were murdered by the pirates of Borneo proper; the ship was plundered by them and the Sambas pirates. – In 1810 Capt. Ross was cut off. – In 1811 Capt. Graves was cut off by the Pasir pirates. – In 1812, the enormities of Pangeran Annam have out-heroded Herod; these are too recent to require recapitulation. Independent of his depredations on the *Coromandel*, the Portuguese ship, &c. nine Europeans of the *Hecate* have been seized and made slaves: two have been since murdered, two have escaped, and five are ham-strung and otherwise maimed. Mrs. Ross and her son are still in slavery there (Hunt 1820a:45-46).

A different impression of Pangeran Anom is given in the memoirs of Captain David Macdonald (1840).<sup>7</sup> Macdonald commanded a "cruizer" (corvette) of the EIC's navy that was based in Bombay and took part in campaigns against the Pangeran, who in 1813 put a price on his head. Hostilities over, Macdonald met the Pangeran in 1814 at Sambas. According to Macdonald, the Pangeran believed himself protected from Europeans because he had survived a shot in an earlier action with the EIC. The ball, in his face, was never extracted. "But of whatever atrocities and crimes he may have been accused – and doubtless there were many – there must still have existed some secret agency, some one redeeming point of character by which he retained so firm a hold over the affections of the Malay, Dayak, and the enormous Chinese population of the mining districts, as well as those loose and idle spirits who came to join him, into whom he instilled a portion of his own energy and courage" (Macdonald 1840:206). In

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6 Hunt's report – the original now apparently lost – was first published in *Malayan Miscellanies* (Hunt 1820a); the date of the report was given as 1812. As discussed below in the Appendix it was possibly actually written in 1813 when Hunt was Raffles's representative in Pontianak. This version, along with other material cited later, is now accessible via Google Book Search: "Malayan Miscellanies J. Hunt". It was reprinted by Moor (Hunt 1837), with minor editorial changes. This second version was also included in Keppel (1846, Vol 2; Appendix 2: xvi-lxiii); this is now available online on the Cornell University "Southeast Asia Visions" website: <http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/s/sea/>). Details of the Sultan of Pontianak's unpleasant punishments of adulterers are omitted in this last version.

7 The book itself is undated but is given as c.1840 in library catalogues. Macdonald commented in his Introduction that he first set down his memoirs in 1830. Pagination here refers to the third edition in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. There is another version of the third edition (e.g. in the British Library, London, and now also available online on the Cornell University "Southeast Asia Visions" website). This version has a different publisher (Benson and Barling, Weymouth) and is shorter, but also includes the material cited here except where noted otherwise.



other words, Pangeran Anom was a charismatic leader with the ability to hold together some very disparate racial groups. He “was apparently about thirty years of age, perhaps a little more” [indeed he was], “and although slightly deformed, might still be called a smart-looking little man; his mother was a Chinese, and from her he inherited the fair complexion and features, with the smallest hands and feet it is possible to conceive, and much of the cunning and shrewdness of that race. His face was disfigured by a blemish on the cheek” [caused by the shot in the action in 1805]... “which, when excited, gave his mouth a peculiarly disagreeable expression.” He “spoke with great rapidity and fluency” [Macdonald: unlike most Malays] “while his restless little eyes gave evident indication of an irascible and vindictive temper...”, though there was no illustration of this during Macdonald’s stay of three days at Sambas (Macdonald 1840:305-6).

This paper summarizes Pangeran Anom’s early life, re-examines some of the piratical deeds of which he was accused, and includes information from sources that have received little attention. It places the events in the context of the political climate in the region at the time and considers whether Pangeran Anom has been ill-judged by history. Because of the emphasis given over the years to John Hunt’s report to Raffles, I attach an appendix summarizing Hunt’s activities at the time, building on the account in Dutch by de Haan (1935:584-86).

### **Pangeran Anom’s rise to power**

According to current genealogy of the Sambas sultanate (Buyers 2002-2005), Pangeran Anom was born in 1767. He was the son of a royal concubine, and half-brother of the Sultan of Sambas who succeeded to the throne in 1790. The sultan was a weak man and the Pangeran strove to exert his own authority (Veth 1854:367). He allied himself with the Chinese from Monterado, who by then paid little heed to the demands of Sambas for taxes. Pangeran Anom settled for five years among the Chinese not far from the coast on the lower Sungai Dori. He dressed in Chinese style, sacrificed in their temples and gambled with them (Veth 1854:367). This distinctly “un-Malay” behavior is explicable by his Chinese blood (assuming Macdonald’s account is accurate), though his mother was most likely an offspring of a Chinese father and Dayak (or Chinese/Dayak) mother. The Pangeran also became an active dealer in opium and the Chinese paid him taxes previously paid to the sultan. After five years, mediation by the royal family caused him to be reconciled with the sultan, who appointed him Pangeran Bendahara, i.e., Regent of Sambas (Veth 1854:367).

Pangeran Anom’s close relations with “pirates” began during his time on the Sungai Dori, and continued, with the sultan’s support, after his return to the capital (Veth 1854:368). He became associated with the Illanun (Iranun) raiders and others who included those from Bangka, Sarawak, Brunei, and Pasir (Hunt 1820a). According to Veth (1854:368), Pangeran Anom’s first great undertaking was directed in 1799 against Banjarmasin. At the head of 15 or 16 “*penjajaps*” (long, two-masted vessels) he burned a vessel belonging to the Sultan of Banjarmasin. He was driven away after a fierce battle with armed vessels sent by the Dutch Resident and after, according to his own account, capturing two *prahus* under Dutch colors (Richardson 1805:60). The departure of the Dutch from the region by the end of the eighteenth century doubtless weakened the strength and influence of both Banjarmasin and Pontianak, where the Dutch had held



fortified outposts.

Relations between Sambas and the Illanun pirates were not always harmonious. In 1803 a force of Illanun *prahus* plundered the lower reaches of the Sambas River, causing *prahus* from Sambas to counterattack. Hostile relations were also demonstrated when a Sambas *prahu* took a *prahu* from Java that was then captured by some Illanun pirates, and finally retaken by Pangeran Anom and his fleet (Richardson 1805:51-52). The main maritime efforts of Sambas were, however, directed against Pontianak. In 1803 Sambas planned to use 40 fighting *prahus*, plus the captured Java *prahu* and a captured British country ship, the *Calcutta*, to cut off Chinese junks at Pontianak, and capture the town. If this were successful, Banjarmasin would be attacked again (Richardson 1805:60). This campaign does not seem to have eventuated, at least on the scale that was planned, but attacks against Pontianak continued. As time went on, Sambas formed alliances with other raiders, including the Illanuns, to strengthen their forces (Veth 1854:386).

Banjarmasin and Pontianak were greatly alarmed by the threats from Sambas and lobbied the EIC for the support that they had previously enjoyed from the Dutch. In January 1811 Raffles, then in Malacca, warned Lord Minto, EIC Governor-General in India, that Banjarmasin was unstable after the departure of the Dutch and that in 1810 Pangeran Anom had carried away 50 local vessels (Raffles 1811). In February and March 1811, Sultan Kassim of Pontianak wrote to Raffles seeking help against Pangeran Anom and the Illanuns, who had plundered two Chinese junks in Pontianak roads. He also said that the Illanuns were gathering at Sambas (Ahmat 1971). The letters were accompanied by correspondence from Joseph Burn, a disgraced British country trader, who was living in Pontianak and to whom Raffles had also written (Burn 1811; Smith 2004; Reece and Smith 2006). This correspondence was prompted by requests from Raffles for information about attacks on British country vessels that were attributed to Pangeran Anom, some of which were listed a little later in Hunt's report. It is therefore useful now to return to Hunt's list of attacks. As will be seen, it is, in fact, very inaccurate and incomplete.

### Death of Captain Sadler

Sambas was not involved in the murder of Captain Sadler and his boat's crew, which occurred at Mempawah in 1795.<sup>8</sup> The deed was done by the then Panembahan Kassim who ruled there on behalf of his father, Sultan Abdulrahman of Pontianak. Although at the time Kassim attempted to blame Sambas (Nicholl 1984), it became well-known in Pontianak that he was the guilty party.<sup>9</sup> According to Burn (1811:57-60), Kassim had been heavily in debt to Sadler. Kassim later told Macdonald that he had killed Sadler because the latter had sold him small arms that were useless because they had no touch-holes, and that Sadler had become drunk, threatened Kassim with a pistol, and invaded the harem. However, Kassim said that he later paid the debt (presumably to Sadler's

<sup>8</sup> Hunt's date "1769" is presumably a misprint for "1796," itself incorrect.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholl (1984) was responsible for publication of a letter written in 1795 by William Midwinter, who was on the ship – its name surprisingly not given – at the time of Sadler's death. Midwinter related the false account given by Kassim to the ship's officers and crew after Sadler's disappearance at Mempawah, and also other experiences of country trade in the region.



employers). Macdonald commented that traders often treated the natives dishonorably. As a result, the latter were often branded “bloodthirsty and treacherous” (Macdonald 1840:216-219). This was clearly something not unique to the Sambas sultanate.

### Capture of the *Calcutta* and the aftermath

The country ship commanded by Captain Drysdale in 1803 was not the “*Susanna*” but the *Calcutta*.<sup>10</sup> It was indeed captured by Pangeran Anom, and the loss illustrates very well the uncertain relationships between the European traders and the local native rulers.<sup>11</sup> After an extensive voyage from Calcutta through the East Indies, the ship arrived in Borneo in mid-June 1803. By 1 July it was in Sambas roads in company with the *Clyde*, commanded by Captain Tait. The ships soon departed, the *Clyde* bound for Penang and the *Calcutta* for Selekau to the south, the latter voyage in accord with an agreement with Pangeran Anom. Captain Drysdale had purchased six chests of opium from Captain Tait, who had previously pledged them to Pangeran Anom, but Drysdale tried to overcharge the Pangeran. Although Drysdale took the usual precautions against attack by issuing arms, he allowed on board too many of the local people along with Pangeran Anom. Drysdale was stabbed and thrown overboard, the first officer was wounded and jumped overboard to swim ashore but was drowned, and most of the senior crew members and nine sepoy were murdered. Seven crew members who had jumped overboard reached the shore and were subsequently taken by local Chinese to Pontianak. The sole British survivor was John Burgh, the second officer. He had gone into the hold to select some bales of textiles for the Pangeran and by the time he was back on deck the massacre had taken place. After a chase worthy of a Hollywood action movie, Burgh was wounded, and overpowered along with other survivors, who included the *serang* (boatswain), *lascars* (ordinary seamen), Drysdale’s “native girl” and a slave boy. The arrival of the Sultan of Sambas restored calm. He told Burgh that “the ship *Calcutta* was doomed to be seized and the commander and other Christians on board to be massacred by way of recompense for the breach of faith on the part of the master of the vessel [*Clyde*] that absconded.” Had Drysdale wanted to trade fairly, he should not have gone to Selekau (Wright 1961:273, citing EIC records; also Richardson 1805:26-30). The survivors were detained at Selekau or nearby. Pangeran Anom repeatedly asked Burgh to take charge of the ship and its crew plus 150 Malays in the service of Sambas, but he refused, as he had no wish to become a renegade and pirate.

Burgh was allowed to leave in December 1803 on the *Duchess of York*, another country ship that had arrived in Sambas roads in ignorance of the capture of the *Calcutta*.

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10 A vessel called “Susannah” was captured by pirates between Batavia and Sulu “in about 1807.” It was “under Danish colours.” This information is in the only report that I have seen about this event, which was brought to the attention of the Government in Java as late as 1814 by relatives of French passengers whose fate was unknown (Java Factory Records; Separate Dependencies Consultations, 14 September 1814). No evidence is given that Sambas was involved. Hunt was in Sulu in 1810 and would presumably have known about this event.

11 The circumstances are known from the EIC reports and in much more detail from the book, already cited here, by James Douglas Richardson (1805); it was derived from the journal of John Burgh. The only copy known to the present author is in the Toyo Bunko Library, Tokyo, which kindly provided a photocopy. The book deserves to be better known: hence this summary.



(The fate of the other survivors was not recorded.) The sultan said that if the British would help him capture Pontianak he would willingly pay an annual tribute. The sultan gave Burgh a letter to the governor of Penang, intended to explain the circumstances in the best possible light. This all shows that the British were not afraid to trade with Sambas and that the “piracy” should be assessed in the context of local commercial and political circumstances. Sambas clearly traded as well as raided, and the plundering of the *Calcutta* arose directly from bad faith among the traders.

Richardson ended his account with comments on the best course of action if the British were to seek restitution for the loss of the *Calcutta*, or to give security to British commerce in the area, which was a considerable market for opium and piece goods. He pointed out that Sambas depended on imported rice and other foodstuffs from Java and elsewhere, paid for with gold dust. Richardson suggested that one or two armed vessels cruising along the track of the *prahus* from Sambas could easily intercept them and cut off Sambas’ supplies. He believed that an attack on Sambas would not be feasible because of the sandbar that would prevent entry of vessels drawing more than 13-14 feet of water. Further, the vessels would have to be warped up, with ropes made fast to trees, for 40 miles before the town was reached. The country all around was a swamp, thus, presumably in his opinion, precluding an attack by land (Richardson 1805:59-71).

Robert Farquhar in Penang initially did not believe that the matter was worth pursuing. In his opinion the ship would be in poor condition and although the town of Sambas could be destroyed by a small expeditionary force, that would be difficult because of its location. He pointed out to his superiors in Calcutta that the polities on the coast of Borneo could nearly all be called to account on the same score (“piracy”), that many of their rulers were related and hence an expedition to Sambas could be fatal to future traders (Wright 1961:273-74). However, Pangeran Anom in fact armed and manned the *Calcutta* (probably with some of its original crew), so in April 1805 Penang sent an expedition to recapture the ship. The EIC’s cruizer *Les Frères Unis*, accompanied by the armed ship *Belisarius* and small vessels provided by Pontianak and manned by Chinese, proceeded upriver towards Sambas and recaptured the *Calcutta*, with two Chinese junks and two large *prahus*. Pangeran Anom escaped in a small boat and was believed (incorrectly, of course) to have died from his wounds (Richardson 1805:74-75, citing the report by Capt. Robert Deane to Farquhar). He soon returned to Sambas.

### Capture of the *Commerce*

The *Commerce* was lost not in 1806 but early in 1810, and Sambas pirates were not responsible. The *Commerce* was returning from Manila and became disabled and drifted ashore in the Tambelan islands off the coast of West Borneo. Captain Chapman went to Malacca to obtain material to make the ship serviceable. When he returned he found a fight in progress between *prahus* from Brunei and local islands for possession of the ship, which was set adrift. Chapman’s Malay crew begged him not to follow for fear of their lives, so he gave up the chase. It was reported that some of the cargo of sugar had gone to Pontianak (*Prince of Wales Island Government Gazette* 5/210: 3 Mar 1810; 5/220: 12 May 1810).<sup>12</sup> The Sultan of Pontianak and Burn informed Raffles in February

<sup>12</sup> This semi-official publication was established in February 1806; it was published weekly, with an occasional special issue (“Extraordinary”). Volumes were supposed to cover 52 issues, but



1811 that the *Commerce* had been finally seized by the pirates of Sarawak in conjunction with those of Sambas (Burn 1811:5; also Ahmat 1971). The captain and 45 of the crew were sent as slaves to Brunei (Wright 1961:272, citing EIC records).

### **Capture of the *Malacca* and the aftermath**

The brig *Malacca*, commanded by Hercules Ross, was attacked near Muntok at Bangka at the end of May or beginning of June, 1810, shortly after the loss of the *Commerce*, and Ross was killed. According to the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* (PG 6/224:9 Jun 1810; 6/230:21 Jul 1810), the pirate chiefs lived at Muntok, and much of the cargo of tin ended up at Banjarmasin. Ross had traded in different vessels out of Penang and Malacca for several years, as reported in many issues of the *Gazette*. The *Malacca* was owned by Alexander Hare, who was then based at Malacca. Raffles showed a special interest, perhaps because of his friendship with Hare. Some of the pirate chiefs, including Assang (or Assery etc.) Abdul Rassib (or Rassil, Rashid, Rasib etc.), had taken refuge at Sambas, and Raffles asked the Sultan of Sambas, via Sultan Kassim and Joseph Burn, to hand them over, but he refused. The sultan admitted he had assembled “robbers and wicked men” but that was “because I am poor and wanting in many things.” He had not invited Rassib to stay, but could not arrest him because Sambas collaborated with Muntok (Ahmat 1971). No other sources that I have consulted mention Mrs. Ross and her son, suggesting strongly that she was not a European: there would have been much less interest in the fate of a native wife and a son of mixed race. Rassib became closely allied with Pangeran Anom, with whom he went out on sorties from Sambas to the coastal waters off Mempawah, Pontianak and Banjarmasin. There were now two small ships from Sambas, which were openly challenging Pontianak and threatening to attack Chinese and English vessels.<sup>13</sup> Raffles passed this information on to Lord Minto when the latter arrived at Malacca. Raffles also reported that the longboat of the *Thainstone*, a country vessel from Penang, had been taken and the crew murdered (Lady S. Raffles 1830:46). This event – not recorded by Hunt – occurred at Bangka at the end of June 1810 (PG 6/227:30 Jun 1810); there is no reason to blame Pangeran Anom.

### **Another attack on a brig owned by Hare?**

Macdonald (1840:202-3) discussed with Pangeran Anom the capture of a brig that was returning from Banjarmasin. The Pangeran had been accused of killing the crew but he denied this to Macdonald. He said he had freed the commander, named by Macdonald as Scott, a “drunken and troublesome fellow.” This was said in order to illustrate Macdonald’s view of the types of Europeans in the country trade. I have found no other reference to this attack – it may be a confused reference to the attack on the *Malacca*. The Scotts were Penang-based merchants and traders, and identifying this Scott (if he was a relative) is problematical.

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numbering of early volumes had some inconsistencies. Issues in 1810 were printed as parts of Volumes 4, 5, 6 and 5 again; hence the details that are cited here.

13 Hunt (1820a:51) said that Pontianak had a fleet of two ships, two brigs, 50 *prahus* and about 1000 men.



### **Attack on the *Minto* (or *Lord Minto*)**

Hunt did not mention the attack on this vessel in 1811. The *Minto* was a small armed schooner, chartered by the EIC to survey the coastal waters of West Borneo as the favored route for the British fleet which was mustering in Malacca for the invasion of Java. *Prahus* from Sambas were beaten off after a strong attack “with the loss of several killed and a greater number wounded” (Minto 1880:279). Its commander, William Greig, was well-known to Lord Minto, who was with the British expedition (as was Raffles), and this attack was a considerable black mark against Sambas.

### **Capture of “the Portuguese ship”**

This ship can be identified as the *Diana*, which traded between Penang and Macao (references in *PG*: Apr-May 1811) and was captured near Pasir in East Borneo late in 1811 or early in 1812 (Medhurst 1829; Macdonald 1840:202, 365). The commander of the attacking vessels was possibly not Pangeran Anom but another Sambas resident, later identified by a visiting English missionary, Rev. W.H. Medhurst, as the “Arang Raja Bujang” – possibly Radin Bujang, a member of the extended Sambas royal family (Buyers 2002-2005). He told Medhurst that the ship was decoyed to an island under the pretext of collecting bird nests and, for reasons not given, all on board except the Portuguese boatswain (ship’s mate in some accounts) were killed (Medhurst 1829). The vessel was taken upriver to Sambas and the boatswain (and probably some of the crew) entered Pangeran Anom’s service.

### **Plundering of the *Coromandel* and the aftermath**

The *Coromandel* ran aground on a reef in the Karimata Islands in August 1812. Details were published in November in the *Java Government Gazette* (1/35:24 Oct 1812; 1/36:31 Oct 1812; see also Macdonald 1840:199-201, and Smith 2002). The captain and passengers, including John Palmer, a prominent merchant from Calcutta, went by boat to Pontianak. The “Portuguese ship,” now commanded by Pangeran Anom and with “a motley crew of all nations,” arrived to remove the cargo, chiefly opium, from the wreck. Pangeran Anom persuaded most of the crew of the *Coromandel* to join him. The officers and remainder were camped on shore. At this stage the Pangeran remained “civil” to them but apparently determined to detain them. Some escaped on a *prahu* from Pontianak that was encountered by the *Helen*, a British store-ship sailing from Palembang, which arrived at the scene of the wreck to find the Pangeran’s ship and eight *prahus* from Sambas, some of which had been attacked by *prahus* from Pontianak. One of the latter had been sunk and the crew was ashore preparing to defend themselves with the residue of the crew of the *Coromandel*. The arrival of another ship from Sambas caused the *Helen* to return to Palembang to spread the news. Commanded by Captain David Macdonald, the EIC’s *Aurora* sailed to the Karimata area in mid-September and fell in with vessels from Pontianak with the Captain and passengers from the *Coromandel*. John Palmer transferred to the *Aurora* and told Macdonald that the Pangeran had committed no aggression until the *Coromandel* had been abandoned (i.e. technically there was no piracy) but had obstructed the vessels sent from Pontianak. Macdonald regarded this obstruction as grounds for detaining Pangeran Anom, so the *Aurora* sailed for the Sambas River. One of the ships from Sambas was found at anchor at the mouth of the river and



attacked, but it got over the shallow sandbar and escaped upriver because the *Aurora* was unable to follow.

### British attacks on Sambas and the aftermath

When news of the fate of the *Coromandel* reached Java, Raffles suggested to Captain James Bowen, commander of the frigate HMS *Phoenix*, that it was time to destroy Sambas.<sup>14</sup> Bowen sailed almost immediately via Pontianak, with the sloops HMS *Procris* and *Barracouta*, and gunboats, plus 100 British soldiers. They were joined by vessels from Pontianak, led by Sultan Kassim. The comments made by Richardson in 1805 turned out to be well-founded. The two sloops and supporting vessels struggled across the sandbar and up the river, which was much narrower than that which led to Palembang. Sambas turned out to be heavily defended by a triple log boom across the river and well-constructed forts, which were unsuccessfully attacked on 15 November. The flotilla withdrew under heavy gunfire and with considerable damage to the *Barracouta*.<sup>15</sup> HMS *Phoenix* returned in December to Batavia, where Bowen suddenly died “under great depression of spirit, a sacrifice to the climate” (*JG* 1/45:2 Jan 1813). Shortly after the attack, Bowen had reported to Vice-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, the naval commander-in-chief in India, that he had acted “in consequence of a communication from Raffles” [about Sambas]. In his report to the Admiralty in London, Hood regretted that he had been prevented by Bowen’s death from learning more about Raffles’s “communications” (Hood 1813). Macdonald (1840:209) said that Bowen had “too overweening a contempt” for the native people, and poor information – he was probably misled by Pontianak – but the force was too small. Pangeran Anom later told Macdonald that he was warned of the forthcoming attack by a fast Chinese vessel from Batavia.

Although Raffles and Gillespie were by then personally on bad terms, they immediately organized a much stronger expedition which built up at the mouth of the Sambas river in the early months of 1813. It was initially an EIC campaign, but was joined by a squadron of vessels of the Royal Navy, no doubt eager to avenge the earlier defeat, and also by the Sultan of Pontianak with his forces. This campaign can be followed in detail in ships’ logs in the English National Archives, Kew, Macdonald (1840) and in the official report by the military commander, Lieut. Col. James Watson.<sup>16</sup> A naval blockade was soon imposed, during which the *Aurora* captured a Chinese junk that had gone aground on the Sambas river bar. Unknown to Macdonald, Pangeran Anom had been aboard and narrowly escaped. The junk was given to the Sultan of Pontianak. After the capture of the junk, a Chinese delegation from Monterado and Landak came to the British military camp. They announced their readiness to withhold supplies from Sambas

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14 Raffles had no authority over the Royal Navy. Bowen had naval command in the successful expedition in March-May 1812 against Palembang, about 60 miles upriver from the east coast of Sumatra. The expedition was under the overall command of Col. Gillespie, the military commander in Java. Thorn (1815: 127-73) gives a detailed eye-witness account of this hazardous expedition, along with the official reports.

15 The assault is recorded in detail in the logs of HMS *Barracouta* and *Procris* in the English National Archives, Kew (formerly the Public Record Office). Otherwise, information is sparse – the episode was covered up as much as possible.

16 The report was published several times, e.g. in Thorn (1815:327-32).



and exchange their connections for protection by the British if the captured vessel was restored – but there was no indication that this occurred. Later, Macdonald captured another of Pangeran Anom's vessels, laden with supplies, including gunpowder and shot from the Sultan of Brunei. This vessel (another junk?) was of great bulk, navigated by the renegade Portuguese boatswain from the *Diana*, and had come from Amoy, with supplies for Monterado and Landak, with 200 Chinese migrants on board (Macdonald 1840:220-23).

As the British forces gathered, the Sultan of Sambas prudently retired to the interior but Pangeran Anom remained, rejecting a request to surrender. Accordingly, the sloops HMS *Hecate* and *Procris*, the EIC's cruisers *Teignmouth* and *Aurora*, the Sultan of Pontianak's ship, and many smaller vessels, with about 1500 troops and armed sailors struggled over the bar and up the river towards the forts.<sup>17</sup> The troops were landed in several divisions on 28 June. Some got lost, but others came across a terrified elderly Malay woman who was persuaded to show them the way to attack the main fort from the rear. The assault was successful and Pangeran Anom fled upriver in a small boat, escaping a botched pincer movement to attack Sambas from the rear and so capture him. His vessels – the “Portuguese ship,” a brig and several *prahus* – were burned and the British forces struggled back downriver and over the bar. The campaign was described as a glorious victory, though it took a large toll in subsequent sickness. Further, the political consequences were negligible. Raffles had been keen to destroy Sambas and dethrone the sultan in favor of a ruler from Pontianak, but soon became uncertain about what to do. Pontianak certainly wanted to take over control, and the Chinese miners (especially those from Monterado) were also hoping for autonomy under the British. However, Raffles decided to adhere to the original status quo and the sultan was soon allowed to return on condition of swearing allegiance to the British (several references in *Java Factory Records* for 1813; see Irwin 1955:27). The local people also sought the return of Pangeran Anom, who had retired to Pasir, where he had teamed up with “Rassib,” probably in the second ship from Sambas which was not reported captured in the attack on Sambas. Pangeran Anom was allowed to return, but “Rassib” was not (Macdonald 1840:361-63).

Macdonald's potentially hazardous trip in August 1814 to Sambas was in a small EIC gunboat “completely at their mercy” to receive Pangeran Anom's submission, and his impressions of the Pangeran have already been described here. Macdonald reminded the Pangeran that in 1813 he had put a price on Macdonald's head, at which he showed “feigned humility and contrition.” When Macdonald left Sambas, the gunboat was full of gifts, including a pregnant lady of the court whom the gunboat's Dutch commander agreed to marry (Macdonald 1840:304-8).<sup>18</sup>

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17 Hunt's comment about the capture of the boat's crew of the “Hecate” in 1812 remains a mystery. The log of HMS *Hecate* is also in the English National Archives and gives no mention of piratical attack. Hunt's report was obviously written before the second campaign against Sambas, during which this event might otherwise have occurred (see Appendix). Perhaps Hunt got the name wrong again.

18 Bowen's unsuccessful assault on Sambas returned to haunt Raffles early in 1814, after Gillespie, by then in Calcutta, made a series of serious charges against Raffles's governance in Java. Although Raffles's role was apparently not referred to by Gillespie in writing, Raffles



### Pangeran Anom becomes Sultan of Sambas

Less than a week after Pangeran Anom had made his submission, the sultan died. Pangeran Anom as regent wrote to Raffles, requesting the appointment of a British resident at Sambas, as Raffles had earlier intended. However, by then Raffles had been told by the EIC Government in Bengal not to develop his plans for Borneo (Irwin 1955:31-32). Pangeran Anom was chosen by the ruling families of Sambas as sultan. He reformed himself as far as the British were concerned and in 1815 received an official welcome on the Royal Navy's frigate HMS *Leda*, that had been involved in the assault in 1813 and was paying a farewell visit to the area (see Smith 2002). After the transfer of control in Java back to the Dutch, he wrote to Batavia early in 1817 to request the return of the Dutch to Sambas. His attempts to obtain support from "lord general Raffles" had not succeeded and he needed Dutch aid so that his lands would be better ruled. Optimistically, he asked the Dutch to provide him with a ship armed with 18 guns. Sultan Kassim of Pontianak also requested the return of the Dutch. Eventually a Dutch delegation, with 600 soldiers, arrived at Pontianak on 18 July 1818 and the sultan formally accepted Dutch suzerainty on 9 August (Irwin 1955:49-50). Typically, he promptly enlisted Dutch military support to pacify Tayen on the Kapuas and hence maintain strong control over the lower reaches of the river. The Dutch delegation then proceeded to Sambas, arriving at the river mouth on 2 September. There they encountered the Sultan of Sambas with a large fleet of *prahus* on the point of raiding Pontianak. He quickly changed his mind and also accepted Dutch suzerainty, the Dutch flag being raised at Sambas on 6 September 1818 (Irwin 1955:50-51).

Events after this time lie beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the increasing independence of the Chinese *kongsis*, and the ongoing tensions and warfare between them, decreased the Sultan of Sambas's authority, as did the presence of the Dutch officials (Yuan 2000). He died in July 1828. The missionary Rev. W.H. Medhurst arrived very soon afterwards – certainly a sign of changing times. His correspondence and reports make it clear that the sometime Pangeran Anom was still greatly respected and that the inhabitants of Sambas looked back with nostalgia on their days of "piratical" glory (Medhurst 1829; for other references see Smith 2002).

### Conclusion

Much of the evidence given here shows that while Pangeran Anom was undoubtedly an aggressive man of his times who followed the time-honored career of maritime raiding, his activities were greatly influenced by external events, especially the increasing influence of Pontianak. He went to considerable effort to try to establish a naval force, perhaps to balance that of Pontianak, and at the same time maintained trade both with Europeans and Chinese. The Pangeran's mixed ethnic background that

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believed that he had raised it with both the military and naval commanders in India. In his detailed defense against the charges, Raffles (1814) felt obliged to emphasize that Gillespie had agreed to provide the small military force and that Bowen was solely responsible for planning and mounting the attack. Further, he (Raffles) had already been exonerated from blame by Lord Minto. Gillespie was killed in action later in 1814 but the charges were not cleared up in Raffles's favor until 1817, when he was in England. Wurtzburg (1954, *passim*) gives a detailed account.



presumably facilitated relations with local Chinese and Dayak people is especially intriguing. Accordingly, there is really no need for me to “rehabilitate” him, even by challenging Eurocentric views about “Malay piracy” – already challenged by Warren (2001) with respect to the Illanuns who became allies of Sambas. Apart from Macdonald’s views – albeit recorded after some 20 years – the fact that the Pangeran was accepted as sultan by the British and reigned without much negative comment by the Dutch, as far as I know, shows that he graduated successfully from “pirate” (dare I say “terrorist”?) to established ruler. Of course, such graduation (and changed views by external powers) is not at all unique in recent history. Stereotyping rulers as absolute villains is best left to politicians and the media: history is rarely so straightforward.

### Appendix: John Hunt

Hunt’s original report to Raffles was possibly destroyed in the fire on the *Fame*, in which Raffles was traveling when he finally left Bencoolen in 1824. Despite the inaccuracies, we are fortunate that it was thought useful enough to be included in the short-lived *Malayan Miscellanies*, a publication established by Raffles. Hunt’s report tells us that he had traveled along the coast of West Borneo, and he was also involved in a voyage or voyages to Sulu. A report in the *Prince of Wales Island Gazette* says that he was supercargo in the *Harrier* when in 1810 this vessel was wrecked on the north coast of Borneo. The officers and crew narrowly escaped being killed by the local people. There was quite a strong British naval presence there at the time, including the *Lord Minto*, commanded by Captain Greig. The Sultan of Sulu, who helped in the rescue, was thanked by the British and promised to support them (*PG* 5/241:6 Oct 1810). According to Gibson-Hill (1959), Hunt was shipwrecked in the *Seaflower* in the Sulu Sea in 1812. There was an HMS *Seaflower* and a merchant vessel called *Seaflower* at this time, but Gibson-Hill’s comment (with no citations) must reflect confusion with the wreck of the *Harrier*, as this was the only vessel referred to by Hunt in his own account of Sulu (Hunt 1820b). Hunt arrived in Batavia in the middle of 1812 and gave an effusive address to Raffles at a function on 23 September 1812 (*JG* “Extraordinary”: 29 Sept. 1812; also reported in *PG* 7/351:21 Nov 1812). The time of his arrival helps explain his errors in listing “from memory” (Hunt 1820a:44) the attacks on British vessels that occurred when he was not in the region. Hunt was in Batavia at the end of December 1812 when he took delivery of a small musical ensemble at the expense of the Batavia Government (de Haan 1935:585). This was possibly a privilege of his forthcoming appointment in Pontianak. Hunt went to Pontianak as resident and commercial agent early in 1813 and stayed there for some months. *The Prince of Wales Island Gazette*, reporting the appointment in Pontianak, stated that Hunt had been the master attendant at Negapatam in southern India (*PG* 7/364:20 Feb 1813). Lists of Europeans (not employed by the EIC) in issues of the EIC’s *East-India Register & Directory* between 1803 and 1809 name the master attendant as “James Hunt.” Presumably that name was a continuing mistake (though a surprising one), or perhaps there was confusion in Penang. Given the time taken to update entries in the *Register & Directory*, the timing of the disappearance of “James Hunt” fits with John Hunt’s voyage to Sulu.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Of course, John Hunt may have been related to James Hunt. There must be more material about Hunt in EIC records that would help clear up his identity and early life.



In his report to Raffles, Hunt mentioned events in late 1812, such as an attack from Sambas on Mempawah “in October last” and (rather obscurely) the unsuccessful British attack on Sambas on 15 November 1812. Thus, he mentioned that HMS *Barracouta* just scraped over a reef of rocks in the river, and that below the forts below Sambas had “to haul athwart the river, to get her broadside to bear.” He also mentioned the view from the masthead (Hunt 1820a:54). These details suggest that he may have been present as a volunteer, though I know of no other evidence. In addition, in sentences in *Malayan Miscellanies* that were edited out of Moor’s reprint (Hunt 1837), Hunt referred to his attempts to obtain early manuscripts for Raffles at Pontianak. He could not obtain any ancient records from the Sultan of Pontianak “but was informed by him, he had sent you [Raffles] three historical manuscripts per favor of Capt. Graves” (Hunt 1820a:6).<sup>20</sup> These comments, and detailed information about Pontianak that was not given by Joseph Burn, suggest that Hunt may have been established at Pontianak when he wrote the report and that the correct date may not be 1812 but 1813. If not, it must have been written very late in 1812. Volume 1 of *Malay Miscellanies* contained many printer’s errors, for which the editor (William Jack) apologized. This is not an important matter in the present context, though it is clear that in assessing Raffles’s policy in the region, Bastin (1954) was wrong in assuming that Hunt’s report was a factor in Raffles’s support for the unsuccessful assault led by Captain Bowen.

Hunt’s long report gives much more information about many areas of Borneo, and particularly the north, than does Burn’s but contains the errors about piratical attacks that are analyzed above. The impression is that the crafty Sultan Kassim was successful in presenting to Hunt a misleading case against Sambas. In his report to Raffles, Hunt mentioned mining and the famous Matan “diamond” and briefly described the fruits and other plant products, and the wildlife of Borneo, including mammals, insects “and vermin,” fish and birds: “the ornithology of Borneo is somewhat limited” (Hunt 1820a:23). He showed strong interest in the commercial prospects of fishery and gathering oysters for pearls in northern Borneo and Sulu, commenting that Arab divers from Bahrein and Chulias from Nagore and Negapatam in India could teach local Malays the superiority of diving (Hunt 1820a:33-34). This interest could have resulted from time spent at Negapatam. Hunt was probably also the author of an imaginative account of the origin of the Dayaks and Malays by “H,” written “about two years ago... a few alterations excepted, whilst residing on Borneo.” This was dated 12 May 1815 and was also published in *Malayan Miscellanies* (Anon “H” 1820). It contains little of value apart from possibly his account of the origin of the Dayaks of Sekadau, up the River Kapuas, obtained from a chief of the district, according to whom several of the local tribes originated from the country of Lawai and then “settled on the banks of the great Lawai river” [i.e. the Kapuas] (Anon “H” 1820:29-30). This dispersal was said to be due to defeat in warfare with the “Biajus”, i.e. the Ngadju Dayaks of southern Borneo

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20 I have not tracked down Captain Graves, who as already noted “was [in 1811] cut off by the Pasir pirates with a rich cargo” (Hunt 1820a:45). It is possible that Graves commanded the Portuguese-registered *Diana* (its captain not named in PG), though the implication from Hunt’s wording is that this vessel was attacked in 1812, the year in which Pangeran “out-heroded Herod.” There is no mention of the *Diana* or Graves in a later account that detailed attacks on both Dutch and British vessels over the period covered here, with no emphasis on Sambas (Anon. 1849).



– though Hunt misinterpreted or could not identify the place-names. These details add more snippets of information about Lawai (see Smith 2005).

John Hunt was later involved as Raffles's emissary in an unsuccessful commercial venture that Raffles initiated in 1814 in Sulu and the Philippines, with the aim of extending trade to Canton and so solving the chronic financial problems in Java. The failure was to cause Raffles some embarrassment and, in the words of Bastin (1954:104), was "gently hushed up." According to Captain Macdonald, who was there in the *Aurora*, the reception at Sulu was unfriendly because many of the followers of Pangeran Anom had settled there "and circulated amongst this wild and warlike people the most exaggerated stories of our conduct in the late affairs at Sambas and Palembang." Also, Hunt was "a half-caste gentleman, [and] had spent some years in the Malay trade"; this comment is intriguing with respect to the EIC's definition of "Europeans" included in the *East-India Register & Directory*, assuming that he was the EIC's "James Hunt." On one occasion he was stoned at Sulu (Macdonald 1840:280-5).<sup>21</sup> Hunt afterwards wrote a lengthy geographical and historical account of the Sulu Archipelago and its relations with the Philippines and northern Borneo; this too was published in *Malayan Miscellanies* (Hunt 1820b). He settled in Java as a landowner and died there in 1835 (de Haan 1935:585-86). Despite the inaccuracies in Hunt's account of Borneo, his lyrical description of its attractions and products would have contributed greatly to Raffles's enthusiasm for the island as a future British possession even after the return of the Dutch to Java. As suggested by Bastin (1954), the report apparently also greatly impressed James Brooke: hence its inclusion in Keppel (1846, Vol 2; Appendix 2: xvi-lxiii).

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<sup>21</sup> The short version of Macdonald's "third edition" mentions the stoning of the "Resident" (not named there) but not the other details about Hunt, suggesting that the copy in the Bodleian Library is really a fourth edition. It contains many handwritten notes by Macdonald, showing that he planned yet another edition. I have not tried to track down his later life and date of death.



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